Oral Histories: The Hon. Graham Gunn AM

Interview held in the Watarru Room, Old Parliament House, on Thursday 11 September 2025 at 1pm

Emeritus Professor Clem Macintyre, Interviewer
The Hon. Graham Gunn, Interviewee

CLEM MACINTYRE: Graham Gunn, welcome back to the South Australian parliament. You spent a lot of your life in this building, from being elected in 1970 until you finally left the parliament in 2010, so thanks for coming in today. We look forward to hearing an account of your life and your time in politics, in particular.

GRAHAM GUNN: I think I was very fortunate to have served so long and I always regarded it as a privilege to be a member of parliament and an honour to get higher office.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, I think that's a fair call. Let's start off just talking a bit about your early life, growing up and so on. You were over on the west coast of Eyre Peninsula?

GRAHAM GUNN: I grew up in the Mount Cooper district, which is about 65 ks south-east of Streaky Bay, about 20 ks out from Port Kenny. I lived on a farm there and went to a little one-teacher school in the corner of the paddock, Mount Cooper Primary School, which is not there anymore, of course, and then I went to Scotch College in Adelaide for three years and then I came home to work on the farm.

I had a brief stint at the Institute of Technology, where I studied wool classing and learnt to weld and then was home on the farm and farmed there for a number of years. Then my family bought my uncle out and then 12 months later my father died and I was given the responsibility of running a fairly large farm, which we did. There were some challenges, but I then got elected to the Streaky Bay council.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Let's just go back a bit to those early years first. Some education locally and then a few years in Adelaide at secondary school. Your family was a farming family. Was politics important in the household when you were growing up?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. My father stood for the seat of Grey once.

CLEM MACINTYRE: In federal parliament?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. He was on the council when he joined the Air Force in the Second World War and then he got back on it in later life, but, yes, it was important. He was active in the Liberal Party, or the LCL in those days, and I joined as a fairly young person. I was secretary of the local branch. I was active in other things in the district. I joined the Masonic Lodge as a fairly young person, which was a very good stepping stone if you wanted to get into public life.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So there were political debates in the household—

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, there were discussions about the need to improve the road structure and the telecommunication. We were on a party line. I can remember we were 1U—two shorts and a long, it was. It's a bit different today with mobile phones and satellite. I have three satellite dishes on the house and the farm.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, certainly things have changed. So the focus was mainly on local issues then in terms of—

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, the local issues were important. Education facilities, the ability to be able to get your mail quickly and all of those things were important. Look, we had lots of members of parliament calling in to see us. The late George Bockelberg was a member here. My father was friendly with the late Senator Mattner, people like that. They were always about the place.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you grew up with an awareness of the importance of those issues.

GRAHAM GUNN: I did, yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What's your earliest political memory?

GRAHAM GUNN: Soon after my father died, I was home working in the shed one day and a fellow pulled up in a department of transport car and came up and said to me that they wanted to put a quarry up

on Mount Cooper. I said I didn't have any objection. He said to me, 'If you cause any trouble or object to declaring it a stone reserve, you will have no say on it.' I said, 'Is that so, is it?' As soon as he left, I went up to the house and rang the late Dick Geddes, who had said to me, 'If you have any trouble.' Well, within a week another fellow came. He nearly kissed the ground because he got a rocket and I wasn't going to be difficult. I thought to myself, well, that's how you treat people. There must be better ways of doing this.

One of the things I made up my mind as a member of parliament to do was stick up for people who were treated badly or didn't know how to defend themselves, and I reckon I had a pretty good reputation for doing that. I can tell you about people who were treated badly by bureaucrats. I would ring them up on the phone and say, 'If this comes across my desk again, you're going to get a mention in dispatches,' and put the phone down.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The importance of that personal communication and the face-to-face engagement, particularly in a rural part of Australia, was very important to you.

GRAHAM GUNN: It's terribly important. The situation was that it's not hard to be a good local member, you've just got to be available, you've got to be visible. The thing is, if you go into the little local towns, you let people come and talk to you, you don't talk down to them, and people love getting letters from their member of parliament. If someone talks to you about an issue, if you write back to them a few days later they are very happy.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And they will remember it.

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you were first elected in 1970?

GRAHAM GUNN: That's right.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Preselection, what prompted you to stand and offer yourself as a candidate?

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, because we had a well-meaning member but was very ineffective. A number of people came to me and said, 'You're on the council, you've been very active on the council and done a good job.' I was the President of the Liberal Party on Upper Eyre Peninsula, so I nominated and was successful.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was there any controversy around that, because I think the previous member had just served a single term and you say he wasn't popular?

GRAHAM GUNN: There was a bit of controversy, but at the end of the day he wouldn't have won the seat. Everyone knew that. The National Party would have beaten him for the local member. So the decision the Liberal Party people made there was they wanted to ensure that the seat remained Liberal, so that's what happened.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And this is at a time when we still had an independent Country Party operating at the same time as the LCL?

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, in a limited way.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, in a limited way.

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You must have been one of the youngest members when you first came into the chamber?

GRAHAM GUNN: The first time I walked up the steps, the messenger said, 'Well, what do you want, what are you here for?' I said, 'I've just been elected as the local member.' 'Ah,' they said. I was then met by Stanley George Evans. He was Whip, and took me in and showed me around.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And the campaign itself, was that—

GRAHAM GUNN: It wasn't bad—the Labor Party never ran a very strong campaign, they knew they weren't going to win.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You were always pretty confident you would win?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. Arthur Whyte helped me, he was my campaign offsider, he came from Kimba. I don't know if you remember Arthur Whyte, he was President of the Legislative Council, and he had the one arm, and there was Sir Glen Pearson who he helped me; he was a good person.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That election came early, didn't it?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Because the government had fallen over the Chowilla Dam.

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, that's right.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was that a factor at all, or do you think it was just local issues?

GRAHAM GUNN: It wasn't a factor in our area. It wasn't a factor. The road funding and those things were more of a factor, because Chowilla was a long way from Streaky Bay, or from Kimba, or from Ceduna or Penong.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What do you remember of the process of campaigning, because it was an enormous electorate and you had to get out and—

GRAHAM GUNN: There were a few tricks, if you knew how to whistlestop. If you go into Wudinna and walk down the main street, or are at the post office for half an hour, people know you're there and you just quietly move on. There's one important thing if you're going to be a successful member of parliament: you don't drink and you are nice to people and you go into the shop, or into the paper shop, and make sure you get the local paper because then you can read it and you know what's going on and then you move on to the next spot.

CLEM MACINTYRE: There would have been a lot of travel involved in those early campaigns.

GRAHAM GUNN: Oh, you know, I wore out a lot of motor cars! There were plenty of kangaroos and things on the road, and emus.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But there was good local support from the branch?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. You got good local support from the community, really, in general. Some of the voting was—like at Wharminda I got 48 to nothing. I got 26, I think, down at Sheringa. The second election I think I got about 80-odd to nothing at Chanada. I think Wudinna got about 90 per cent. So, you know, it was very rewarding.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It sounds like you were working your seat very well, very successfully.

GRAHAM GUNN: I made it my business. If you want to be a successful member of parliament, do your job.

CLEM MACINTYRE: We will come to your time in the house in a minute. I want to talk a bit about the level of support that a member had in those days in terms of electorate officers and secretarial assistance, and so on.

GRAHAM GUNN: None. They had a pool of secretaries in Parliament House, who would type some letters for you, and it was up to you then. The branch people would keep you informed.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So how would a local voter have contacted you over an issue, if it was important?

GRAHAM GUNN: They would ring me at home, write to me or ring me when parliament was in session at Parliament House. Lots of people used to come to Parliament House. I used to travel around the electorate on a very regular basis—Streaky Bay and Ceduna. Ceduna was always politically very good for me, the same at Wudinna and Minnipa and all those places.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I am reflecting still on—

GRAHAM GUNN: I played a lot of cricket and I knew a lot of them. The other thing is that I was active in the Masonic Lodge, and therefore I had attended those things and met a lot of the people. They knew who I was, which was pretty important.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I am reflecting that there was an enormous demand upon your time and energy.

GRAHAM GUNN: We weren't paid enough. If I hadn't had some private means, I wouldn't have been able to do what I did. My brother said to me—we were farming together—'I've got to buy you a new car. That car is no good,' and things like that. The suggestion that members are overpaid is complete nonsense.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And in stark contrast to the level of support that is available for members, particularly in rural areas now, managing a big area. You were elected in 1970. You came in. Steele Hall's government has fallen and Don Dunstan is back in office and you are sitting on the opposition benches. Talk us through how you felt as you came into the chamber for the first time. Had you ever been to the parliamentary building before you were elected?

GRAHAM GUNN: Not in the chamber. I had been in the lounge and had a cup of tea with George Bockelberg. It was awe-inspiring for a start. It was a complete new forum. I wasn't that old. I had only been there a few months and Dunstan called me a troglodyte. I make no apology, I had to look it up, I didn't know what he meant. I looked it up in the dictionary. I participated, and I soon became very relaxed in the place. After the first 12 months I would hold my own anywhere, I think. I had a bit of a reputation of being a bit aggressive.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Do you member your first speech?

GRAHAM GUNN: I remember making it but not—

CLEM MACINTYRE: But not the contents so much. Did you have family and so on in the chamber?

GRAHAM GUNN: I'm not sure, because my family were a long way away. They had to make a living. My wife was down here. Her parents were in Adelaide. She was from Adelaide.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Not many people are elected at your age, certainly in the 1970s, and it can be an intimidating environment, I imagine, when you come in for the first time.

GRAHAM GUNN: It was, but I came in with Roger Goldsworthy, Bruce Eastick and people like that and we all got on very well. People like Jim Ferguson and Bill Nankivell were here. They were good people. They were supportive. Bill Nankivell was a good fellow.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was it mainly colleagues showing you the ropes, or did you get much support from the clerks or the library?

GRAHAM GUNN: They were very helpful. Gordon Combe was Clerk. They were good people, very helpful. Aub Dodd said to me, 'If in doubt, always out.' He was dead right.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You said that after about 12 months you felt at home, confident on your feet?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Just to get a feel for what life was like in the 1970s as a parliamentarian, were there still bedrooms upstairs in the parliament?

GRAHAM GUNN: No, that had just finished.

CLEM MACINTYRE: There was a time when we had members coming in from the country and would spend the night.

GRAHAM GUNN: No, that was finished.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You found local accommodation in Adelaide when you were here?

GRAHAM GUNN: I was able to stay with my in-laws for a start. After a few weeks we bought a small house near the Daws Road hospital.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you had local accommodation?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, we had it so that on Friday mornings at 5 o'clock you would shut the door, turn the key and go north.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Go back home.

GRAHAM GUNN: Or go west.

CLEM MACINTYRE: With facilities in the house, you were saying earlier on before we started that the building was a lot less—

GRAHAM GUNN: It was a lot less friendly because it had been run down. The carpets were bad and it wasn't set up for technology, like cables for computers and things of that nature. It wasn't set up. That happened later on.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was it shared offices for members in those days?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, I shared an office with Howard Venning and Claude Allen, three of us.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Three of you in an office?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. They were rural members. Howard Venning was a very good, reliable bloke, then his son, Ivan, came in afterwards.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The character of the house then, I think there were two female members in the chamber when you were elected.

GRAHAM GUNN: Molly Byrne was here and Joyce Steele from Burnside, who was Minister for Education. She was a nice person.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But did it still seem like a—

GRAHAM GUNN: A bit of a boys' club. There was a lot of drinking done at the bar in those early days, but not when I left. It had completely changed. They had kegs of beer and it was quite a lot.

CLEM MACINTYRE: When did that culture begin to change do you think?

GRAHAM GUNN: Probably after about 10 years it really changed. When there became more media attention with things like people running off the road and getting drunk.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I am trying to get a picture of the chamber and the mood.

GRAHAM GUNN: In those days people didn't come to their members of parliament as often as they did later on. Once you got electorate offices, people came, whether it was a federal or a council problem. My attitude was it's not for me to tell the local council what to do. I would tell them I had had a complaint. With the federal, I would say, 'You've got to deal with the federal member,' because I didn't like the federal member cutting across what I was doing and I wasn't going to cut across what they were doing.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So the development of electorate offices meant that members spent less time in here. Perhaps it was a bit less boys' club but a bit less fraternal in terms of social engagement and so on.

GRAHAM GUNN: That's right.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So you would mark that change with the electorate office?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. You operated out of the electorate office, which was a big change, and it gave you more facilities and you had good staff to help you. I always selected local people who were familiar with what was going on, and I think we ran a pretty good show.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You would be increasingly reliant upon the support that they were providing.

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Again, with an enormous land area in the electorate you were representing. When you came in, were you ambitious for high office?

GRAHAM GUNN: No.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You saw yourself as a loyal—

GRAHAM GUNN: My attitude was that I was elected to represent these people. I said, 'I won't make any promises. I'll do my best, but I'll give you a strong and informed voice in parliament.' That's what I set out to do, and whatever else comes I will just take it as it comes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So a focus primarily on local issues?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. I was one of those who got rid of death duties and those sorts of things, to save small businesses and farms and things, which we did. When you help someone on some small thing they never forget it—remember this—and you win a friend forever. When people come to you who have been badly treated, say by an over-aggressive policeman, you have to get on the phone to the chief superintendent

and say, 'Look, I can't tell you what to do, but I can tell you what I'm going to do.' If they would get aggressive you would say, 'That's alright. I brought it to your attention but you obviously like the paper war. I'm going to start it for you.' I named a couple in parliament. After that, the others got very sensible. At a later time, I sent the Serjeant-at-Arms and raided a minister's office as chairman of a parliamentary committee. That caused a stir.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It sounds like you rather enjoyed that combative nature of the role.

GRAHAM GUNN: My view was that the average person is at a grave disadvantage when taken to task by the government, its agencies or instrumentalities. The role of the local member is not only to make laws but to observe and see how existing laws are operating and whether they are being unfair to people. If they are, I was right after them. When people are upset and they don't know how to handle these situations or they have been threatened, that's the role of the local member of parliament. Get on the phone, and go and talk to the minister.

The bureaucrats don't like ministers being lobbied by local members of parliament. There was a trick in this building. The parliament would sit in the evenings when the bureaucrats got home. Go down to the bottom floor and sit and have a chat to the minister. If you give the minister a submission and write on the bottom of it in your handwriting, personally hand it to the minister—marvellous results. You got marvellous results because the bureaucrats can't intercept it, and it gets through.

I had some interesting experiences where senior bureaucrats got very angry with me. I can give you an example. We were at a little location where the council wanted to extend the caravan park. The minister was there. He was one of my own. He was a good minister. I said to the chairman of the council, 'When I say to the minister, "Where do you want it extended?" you take plenty.' So he walked up and said, 'Here.' The minister turned to the head of the department and said, 'That's where it's extended to.' I heard the Director-General say to his offsider, 'This is what happens when you let local members get too close to the minister.' The same thing—have you been to Smoky Bay?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

GRAHAM GUNN: You know the oysters there?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

GRAHAM GUNN: Many years ago when they were going to get those oyster leases going, the bureaucrats tried to stop it. Dean Brown as Premier was coming to the town, so we called in. When he called in there, I said to the potential oyster growers, 'Show Mr Brown where you want the leases to go.' They said, 'They have to go over here because you have to get tidal movement.' John Darley was there. He was the Director-General and a very good fellow. He turned to these two blokes causing the trouble and said, 'Don't come back to Adelaide unless you've approved them. If you don't approve it, keep going west. You haven't got a job.' That's how you got 12 oyster leases there at Smoky Bay, which has made Smoky Bay.

I can go round the north of the state and tell you things where Sir Humphrey tried to stop people doing things but we got them overruled. It was a bit like it at Marree. Harold Allison was the Minister of Education and a good minister. The government decided they were going to put swimming pools in—a good thing—but they decided they would put them up in the Riverland, and Marree wasn't on the list. So I went to Harold, and I said, 'Now, Harold, the railways are leaving Marree because of the new rail line. They will dig the pit if you do it.' So he called Lynton Crosby—now Sir Lynton Crosby—who was his Chief of Staff, and directed him to direct the Director-General to approve Marree, and that's how they got the swimming pool. It was the right decision. It's there today and the kids have got it, and it's good.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It's illustrating the power of the local member with those local issues.

GRAHAM GUNN: And a sensible minister.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

GRAHAM GUNN: A minister who was on top of his brief.

CLEM MACINTYRE: And that would work with both sides of politics?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. I will give you another example. At Roxby Downs, they built a swimming pool there. Technically, it was under the control of the limited local government there. I called in there this day, and the principal said, 'We can't use the swimming pool. This CEO bloke over here won't give us permission.'

I said, 'What are you talking about? A hot day like this?' I said, 'Give us a phone.' So I rang Greg Crafter, who was the minister. I said, 'Greg, we've got this lovely swimming pool here. They are not allowed to use it. This clown over the road here won't allow it.' Crafter said, 'What's your recommendation?' I said, 'My recommendation to you is to approve it.'

So he said, 'Send me a fax with the recommendation, and I'll sign it.' So about an hour later, back it came approved by the minister. I said to the principal, 'Tell the kids to start hopping in there.' The kids were all hopping in the swimming pool, and this bloke came out and he was waving his hands, and the principal said, 'Here, the minister's overrode you.' What he didn't say about me—that didn't matter. But it was just nonsense, you know, just complete and utter nonsense.

On the same day I went to the staffroom at Roxby Downs at morning tea time and a girl brought me up a cup of coffee. The principal said, 'I don't get that treatment,' and she said to him, 'You didn't get me a new house and a cook like Mr Gunn got me. So he's going to get looked after right.' They were nice little things that happened.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, there must be a lot of those stories. Tell us about your relationship with the local media, because there were lots of little journals and papers across the electorate.

GRAHAM GUNN: I got on pretty well with the *West Coast Sentinel* and the *Eyre Peninsula Tribune*. Neither of them exist today. I got on well with the *Port Lincoln Times*. Then you had the ABC at Port Pirie. I got on alright with them; I didn't have any trouble. But we didn't use them as much as we do today. Then, of course, in the last few years I was on the television at Port Augusta on a very regular basis. What a lot of people didn't realise that runs up there: Vickie Chapman's son was the television reporter up there, but his name wasn't Chapman—it's Alex Hart—and they couldn't work out why I got such a good run. That's another story, isn't it?

CLEM MACINTYRE: It is. But again, in the very early days of your time in parliament, local media must have been hugely important, much more than it is today.

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, it was, because they would bring things to my attention, and then I would make a comment, and then I would raise it in the parliament. And if I raised a question in the parliament, they put it in the paper. They put the question and the answer in the paper.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So it worked for both sides in a sense.

GRAHAM GUNN: It did. It was good for them, good for me, yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Coming back to the parliament again, I just want to talk through relationships with other members and so on. Obviously, you were elected first as a Liberal Country League MP, and not long after you were in the parliament, the Liberal Party went through that rupture with the development of the Liberal Movement and so on. Was that existential for the party, really? As a sitting member, how did you find that tension?

GRAHAM GUNN: It wasn't helpful, but I never got involved. I represented a conservative part of the state. My social views were always conservative. So I stayed very firmly—I actually moved the motion to change the name at the state council from Liberal Country League to Liberal, because I believed in the Menzies philosophy. It was trying, but eventually some common sense prevailed. At the end of the day, if you listened to what people were concerned about, you were going to get on alright, but if you tried to impose your views or educate them, you didn't get on too well.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That tension inside the Liberal Party or the LCL before that has clearly bedevilled the conservative side of politics in South Australia for a long time. I just was curious to know the sense of connection between members while those factional battles were at their peak. Was there resentment? Was it a recognition of—

GRAHAM GUNN: There was a bit. There were people like Roger Goldsworthy and those, Bruce Eastick—they were all sound people. Harold Allison and those sorts of people I got on very well with. Peter Arnold was a good friend of mine. I shared an office with him for 11 years and got on very well with him. We were all the same sort of ilk. We were the rural country members. When the Tonkin government was defeated, Peter Arnold and myself increased our majorities in our electorates. That tells you that we must have done the right thing.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

GRAHAM GUNN: The whiz-kids used to try to tell me things, and I said, 'Look, you look after yourselves, and I'll look after myself.' I remember on one occasion I did an interview with a satellite phone just south of Marree for the *Country Hour* in which I advocated increasing the speed limit in those rural areas to 130 ks. It just exploded, and one of them rang me from Adelaide and said, 'What do you think you've done?' I said, 'I've just won the seat for you again—that's all.' They said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'Didn't you hear the Mayor of Coober Pedy on the phone and others, congratulating me and saying well done? You can't buy that sort of publicity.' Once the ABC met with the Mayor of Coober Pedy and others, they all wanted it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You have talked about some good relationships with colleagues in the Liberal Party. Talking to politicians, I often hear stories of friendships across the floor.

GRAHAM GUNN: I got on well with Des Corcoran—I got on alright. Tom Casey, his family lived at Peterborough. His son and daughter-in-law were constituents of mine. Even when he was a minister, he used to quietly come to me and say, 'There's a bit of a problem here. Can you raise it?' You never broke a confidence.

As I said, I got on well with Charlie Wells, the member down there, and there were some other ones. I was on parliamentary committees. You got to know people going around Australia. I got on very well in later years with John Rau, and had a lot to do with him, and still catch up with him for lunch and things. I got on very well with Lynn Arnold. We did a deal about the Karcultaby and Miltaburra schools. They were the right decisions, but there was a bit of flak flying.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That was when he was minister for education?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. He came to me and said, 'What's your view?' I said, 'What we've got to do is: what's the best education result for those children?' I said, 'If you're going to do it, do it quickly because I'm taking a bit of flak.' He said, 'Well, you've got a blue-ribbon seat there, haven't you?' I said, 'Yes, I know that. I can afford to lose 20 votes at Wirrulla. That won't matter. They can afford that.' So we fixed it, and the Karcultaby school is one of the best in the state—one of the best.

When I signed in, I see he has signed in just ahead of me, and I will catch him in a few days' time. I was talking to him at Roger Goldsworthy's funeral. He actually seconded my nomination to be Speaker, and I actually signed and accepted his resignation from parliament.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was it mainly in committees, and when you are travelling and so on, that those friendships were forged?

GRAHAM GUNN: You had to talk to ministers. If you had problems, you had to talk to ministers about things, and I always took the view that you never gave ministers bad advice. When I was taking a delegation to see a minister, my first thing to them was you be polite, and no abuse or threats or you're out or you are losing me, because I've got come back again and see the minister. 'So let's be reasonable,' I said, 'because one unreasonable act always generates another.'

I never had much trouble, personally, dealing with ministers. John Steinle, the Director-General of Education, was a good bloke. I don't know if you have ever met John.

CLEM MACINTYRE: No.

GRAHAM GUNN: He was a good administrator. I well remember at the Karcultaby school, out in front they put a traffic island in. I took a delegation to see the Director-General of Transport, and they said, 'No, it's contrary to road rules. We're not going to do it.' We went down to see the director-general, and we explained to him, and while we were there he picked up the phone and said to the director of transport, 'It has now been brought to your attention. If a semitrailer wipes a school bus off, you're going to wear it.' He said, 'It's now approved.'

When I first became a member of parliament, the senior public servants would give you advice and they would give you the options. It was up to you. A lot of that changed in later years because they had become political appointees, which was not a good thing. You weren't getting professional advice, you were getting some political taint on it which wasn't often in the best interests of the people you were trying to help.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Let's go back to committees. You must have served on a number of committees. Do you remember any great achievements or notable aspects of that time?

GRAHAM GUNN: I served on a committee dealing with the water hassles in the South-East, which Mitch Williams had organised. I was chairing it, and it was pretty obvious that we weren't being told the truth. So I then said, 'Well—

CLEM MACINTYRE: By the witnesses before the committee?

GRAHAM GUNN: Some of the bureaucrats.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The bureaucrats, right.

GRAHAM GUNN: So I went directly to the Serjeant-at-Arms to raid the minister's office and seize the files. Well, that caused a blue, but we got the truth. I took the attitude that parliament had instructed the committee to investigate this issue and report, and we couldn't report truthfully unless we had the information, so that's what happened. It got written up in commonwealth parliamentary journals as a clear example of a parliament exercising its authority over the executive, which was a good thing. I tell you what, it put the willies and fear into the other departments.

We had another example where the committee, which John Rau was chairing, was obviously getting told funny stories, and he said to me, after he gave them a real cross-examination, 'I will probably never be a minister after this.' I said, 'Don't worry. We've got to the bottom of it and we protected some people.' At the end of the day, if the members of parliament don't pursue the issue, you are the last port of call in many cases for people. I always believe that if a member of parliament is not prepared to pursue it, then he shouldn't be a member of parliament. That was always my view.

People would complain to me about the police, and I would say to them, 'Well, I can't tell the police what to do. I can raise your concern with them, but make sure you are telling me the truth, because if you're not telling me the truth you are not going to help.' The police, about 90 per cent of the time, are right. They are not always right, not always. We had some interesting discussions with chief superintendents, and I even had a shouting match with a commissioner once, but that didn't matter. I told that commissioner that he was appointed, and I was elected, and that was the difference in a democracy.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Do you think the committee system became more efficient, more productive, over the course of your time?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, it did. The committee system is very good because it educates members of parliament—they get to understand better how things operate—but it does give people who have been badly treated a venue, so they can come. I will give you another example. Have you been to Innamincka?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

GRAHAM GUNN: Up at Innamincka, there was a chap with a punt, and he was doing a good job. The Department of Environment decided they were going to charge him 10 per cent of his turnover, which was ridiculous, so he came to me, and I took it up with the minister. It was one of our own, and it didn't get on too well, so then I said to John Rau, 'We'll call the head of the department before the environment committee,' which we did, and we gave him a bit. That morning, before they got there, they then exempted him. So I said to this bloke, 'You're very brave when you're dealing with a semi-literate person, but when you get people of equal status, you're pretty weak, aren't you?' I said, 'So you nearly bankrupted this bloke. You're going to refund the money.' At the end of the day, John Rau said to me, 'You had a win there, didn't you?' I said, 'I did, but it was disgraceful.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: That's a good illustration of the power of a committee, and you were talking earlier about the committees in a sense having some greater ability to keep the executive to account.

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What was the prompt, do you think, that began that sort of shift of culture that began to empower the committees a bit more?

GRAHAM GUNN: I think the members of parliament were better informed when they came here, and some of them had worked in various organisations and suddenly realised that not everything they were getting told was kosher. There was a need to make some transparency, and I think that's what happened. They always had a Public Works Committee, which was the top committee, and then it was extended. The Public Accounts Committee is a good committee and, in most parliaments, if heads are called before the

Public Accounts Committee, they are pretty cautious because in the House of Commons the Public Accounts Committee, of course, is chaired by an opposition member, so therefore look out.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but do you think parliamentarians became more professional in their approach over the course of the time you were in the parliament?

GRAHAM GUNN: No doubt about it, they have become more aware of the media. They said to me, 'You need media training.' I said, 'No, I don't need media training. You can have that. I don't need media training.' If you are a member of parliament and you have a public meeting and you can't defend yourself, you shouldn't be the member. That's my idea. I always prided myself that I could look after myself in a public meeting. Whether it was 500 at Coober Pedy or 10 at Streaky Bay, it didn't matter. You have to do your homework.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, do your homework and have the skills that you seem to have had from a young age in terms of speaking up.

GRAHAM GUNN: You've got to have confidence in yourself. You should be able to make speeches without reading them. I never read speeches. I always had confidence in myself that I could. My youngest said, 'What are you going to say, dad?' I said, 'Don't worry, it'll be alright. It'll be alright.' He has turned out to be very, very successful.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Do you remember any really notable speeches that you gave?

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, I think the ones on the Pitjantjatjara land rights act, the death duties act and some of those, and the involvement in the Roxby Downs indenture act. They were all pretty significant.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, they were big issues in the parliament at the time.

GRAHAM GUNN: They were big issues. The Roxby Downs indenture act, when they were protesting on the steps of Parliament House, when the building was surrounded by the STAR Force and that day when Norm Peterson crossed over, that was all very significant. The STAR Force was in the corridors. I remember when the select committee went up to Roxby Downs. I will never forget this. We went into the canteen that night to have tea. There was a big crowd of people there.

A chap got up on a table and said, 'I am the AWU representative here.' He said, 'I want to know which ones of you so-and-sos are for us and who is against us.' I said, 'One, two, three, we are for you, and the others can speak for themselves.' Well, poor old Hop got in on the wrong plane. They nearly got thrown out of the building, because women were yelling at them: 'These are the best jobs we've ever had, and why should we—this is great up here.' Well, it was great. I remember Dean Brown. I flew Dean Brown and myself up, and they got the first borehole up there.

CLEM MACINTYRE: He was there for that?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, the first borehole, and a bloke called Joe Tiernan—who died, he didn't last long. He was the TAFE rep.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, a member very briefly after the 1993 election. Let's come to your time as Speaker. I think we worked out that you watched eight other men as Speaker from when you were elected until you were elected as Speaker. Did you have a conscious role model when you took the office?

GRAHAM GUNN: No, I had been Deputy Speaker in the previous parliament, so that was good practice. I had made sure I had studied the standing orders, and I had followed parliamentary procedure around the world. I read those commonwealth parliamentary magazines each three months when they came out; they had a lot of stuff in them. I remember speaking to Speaker Weatherill in the House of Commons, having a good briefing with him and one or two others.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Just after you were elected?

GRAHAM GUNN: No, before.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Before you were elected.

GRAHAM GUNN: And I was good friends with a bloke called Clive Griffiths, who was the President of the Legislative Council in Western Australia. He was a great help to me. What I never told anyone was that if there was a difficult situation I wasn't sure about, I would ring Clive and he would talk to his Clerk and ring me back. I never told the clerks I was getting this outside advice.

CLEM MACINTYRE: They must have wondered where your insights were coming from.

GRAHAM GUNN: They were wondering, yes. I didn't tell them. I got good advice from them. I got on well with Geof Mitchell.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Who was Clerk at the time.

GRAHAM GUNN: I got on well with him, and I didn't have any problem. I got this outside advice. Another bloke called Kevin Rozzoli was Speaker in New South Wales, and I got on well with him. He wrote a book. There was another good book put out by McGee, a former Clerk of the New Zealand Parliament, which was very good. He then became the Ombudsman in New Zealand. That was a very good book.

CLEM MACINTYRE: A good grounding for you in terms of—

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. McGee was good. I met McGee a few times.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you enjoy being Speaker?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, it was interesting. A bit stressful, but it was interesting. Although it was challenging, that's what you are there for.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How did you feel on that very first day when you were running question time for the first time?

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, you know, they always try the Speaker on. But what you have to understand is, if the Speaker doesn't know the standing order there is no point of order. Don't argue. The first person I sat down hard was the Premier, Dean Brown. He was a bit cross about it, but I thought, 'I've got to let people know I'm fair dinkum, and he'd be the best one.' He said, 'I haven't finished.' I said, 'You have. Premier, resume your seat. Next question.' He came in and I said, 'Now, just calm yourself down a bit. There's no need to get your blood pressure up. It's all okay, but you were the first one.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: Was that a tactic you had thought about in advance?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition got a better run than anyone else.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Sure. There were some members you had some trouble with, though.

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, Foley got the wrath of the Chair a few times. He had a very short fuse, a very short fuse.

CLEM MACINTYRE: This is Kevin Foley, who was deputy leader of Labor at the time, yes?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. He would get aggressive, therefore I used to say, 'If the honourable member wants to be with us for the rest of the afternoon, it is now in his hands. It is entirely in your hands. It doesn't make any difference to me, but you will be on your way.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you throw many out?

GRAHAM GUNN: I threw three or four out, yes. I had no alternative. I threw one out as deputy speaker. He rushed across to the Premier and started threatening and banging. I had no alternative. I got the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove him. You can't have that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. There are plenty of examples around parliaments of the world where that has—

GRAHAM GUNN: Very dangerous.

CLEM MACINTYRE: What about the process in your work as a presiding officer, managing the parliamentary precinct and so on?

GRAHAM GUNN: That was very interesting. You had the library, which is a very important function, and the dining room and things. We had very good staff here and it all worked pretty well. I thought it worked pretty well. I didn't have any trouble with that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I think I am right in saying it was when you were Speaker that things like security around the building were beefed up?

GRAHAM GUNN: It was, because when the police come and give you advice, you would be very foolish to ignore it, wouldn't you? There were security breaches and people were coming in with knives and things. You can't have that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: But you had advice from South Australian Police that there were—

GRAHAM GUNN: There was a need to improve.

CLEM MACINTYRE: There was a need to improve security.

GRAHAM GUNN: Then you had no alternative.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, that makes sense. One other change we were talking about again before we started the interview was the introduction of flags in the chambers.

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, I went to a parliament and I saw the flags and I thought, 'We should have the South Australian flags here.' One of the things I did when I was on the Streaky Bay council in 1967 was to get the flag flown from the building. I am a great believer in the thing. I don't believe people should be burning the flags. I am a pro-monarchist and a pro-flag waver.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That more or less coincided with a time when there was much more television coverage of events in the chamber?

GRAHAM GUNN: That's right, yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Politicians often talk about behaviour in the parliament before and after the introduction of TV cameras. Did you notice much change when there were cameras in there?

GRAHAM GUNN: Not too many people are going to want to make a fool of themselves and be spread across the news at night, are they? So it's a bit of a sobering fact, isn't it?

CLEM MACINTYRE: It is and I'm wondering whether there were certain members playing up to the cameras.

GRAHAM GUNN: There are people who play up, but then there were some rules under which that can be edited, can't it? If there's a kerfuffle the cameras are supposed to go on the Speaker. Does that still exist? I think it goes on the Speaker, so they don't get on.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Were there any other great issues in terms of managing the parliamentary process and so on during that time?

GRAHAM GUNN: There are a number of people who have been excluded from the building. That's one of the challenges the Speaker has, if you've got to exclude them for a certain time. If they are threatening people or being disruptive and causing a problem with the staff, there's always those sorts of things. The general conduct of members I think has improved overs the years, it really has, yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, you mentioned earlier the professionalism that you had observed.

GRAHAM GUNN: I don't come in here very often these days because I've got a few other things I do, but I'm still on the Streaky Bay council for my sins. I've got another 11 or 12 months to go. I acted as mayor for about three months when they had all that hassle, but I didn't want to be in Streaky Bay every second day.

CLEM MACINTYRE: While you were Speaker, you would have had to spend a lot more time in Adelaide than as a backbench member, I am imagining.

GRAHAM GUNN: But if you get yourself organised, even if you've got to spend a bit more here on the Thursday night, I always liked to get up to my electorate on the Friday. Whether it was at Port Augusta or wherever it was, I used to like to be up in the electorate over the weekend.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The electorate was still Eyre when you were Speaker, wasn't it, before you moved to Stuart?

GRAHAM GUNN: It became Stuart, yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: That was a more marginal seat, Stuart, I think I am right in saying?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, it was.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you feel you had to work harder during election campaigns?

GRAHAM GUNN: I was the first Liberal to have had a shingle up in Port Augusta since 1915. Then after three months it all settled down and they suddenly realised that I didn't have two heads and that I was very approachable. Every lunchtime I would walk down the mall and have lunch down there. I let people come up and talk to me and you would be surprised. The other thing we did was they had these trainees and I appointed local ones as trainees.

CLEM MACINTYRE: In the office?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, and they brought a group of people with them.

CLEM MACINTYRE: How many did you have in the office by the time you finished up in the parliament, at the local level?

GRAHAM GUNN: I had two staff members and a trainee. I had good local people and they were very efficient. If people came to you with a problem and you solved it, you won the whole family. One of the great problems there was disruptive tenants. Ninety per cent of the people with the Housing Trust were good people who didn't cause any trouble, but that small percentage did and they were terrorising the whole street. If you got them evicted, you won the street, because people didn't want their fences pulled down, they didn't want their cars vandalised or to be kept awake all night.

My attitude was with the Housing Trust was the taxpayers are giving them a decent house, the taxpayers are giving it at a reasonable rate, they then have to respect other people's privacy and property, otherwise they are out. The woman said, 'You're hard.' I said, 'No, they're out.' That worked very well. I would front up to public meetings in Port Augusta where in the past their local member wouldn't.

I got all the shacks freeholded, which their own Labor ministers wouldn't do. They said to me when it was happening, 'Why is it happening now?' I said, 'Well, the Liberal Party believes in people owning their property. 'Oh', they said. I had one lady say to me, after I got on the board of the Flying Doctor, 'We want to freehold our property up in the Flinders'.

I said, 'When you look down on the gulf, see all those shacks there that have been freeholded, the only reason they were freeholded is that I became the member here. If you want your property up there freeholded you had better tell your brother not to go on the television and continue to bag the Liberal Party, because the only ones that will do it will be the Liberal Party, and every time you went to the ballot box you voted against freeholding.' She said, 'I never thought of that.' I said, 'Well, that's the facts. That is a fact of life'. That was true. I had better not say the names.

CLEM MACINTYRE: No. Over 40 years sitting in the chamber, we have not counted up the number of members you served alongside, but it must be almost a record number. Who were the great figures who stand out to you, the great orators, those who dominated the parliament or the larger-than-life figures?

GRAHAM GUNN: Dunstan was very significant. Dean Brown was very good. John Combe was a good orator. Tonkin had his skills. Rann was a very good political operator. I got on personally very well with Rann—very well. I was on a parliamentary committee with him, went all around the north of South Australia. He sent me to the 90th anniversary of the signing of the armistice at Villers-Bretonneux.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You had been sent as a delegate, almost, just by members of the Liberal Party?

GRAHAM GUNN: Labor Party, both.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Across both parties?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes. There were lots of things they would get me to go and talk to Rann about. When some of the members were having trouble, even Labor members in their electorate offices, they would come and talk to me about how to handle them.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You have talked about some of the dominant figures in the parliament, former premiers, and so on, but were there others who really stand out to you as the quiet achievers, those who got on and got the job done and were really efficient parliamentarians?

GRAHAM GUNN: Look at Harold Allison's result. There were people like that. When he stood for Mount Gambier he was told he wouldn't win. He walked it in, and then he continued to walk it in with well over 75 per cent. There were other members who had great success stories. Bruce Eastick held a marginal

seat. At the end of the day, if the local member does his job they've got more than a 50 per cent chance of getting re-elected, but you've got to be seen and you've got to make sure you understand what the issues are, and be sympathetic.

CLEM MACINTYRE: After 40 years, do you think you really enjoyed your time in the place? I suppose you must have done or you wouldn't have kept coming back.

GRAHAM GUNN: You don't have to stay. I found it rewarding, stimulating and challenging. I think I was very fortunate to be elected as many times as I was. I was elected 12 times, and I could have been elected 13 but I decided I had had enough. I knew that Dan van Holst Pellekaan would be a good member, and he was, and I knew he was going to win. I didn't tell him out from the election, but I knew from going around the electorate six months before that he was going to win. I knew that. I could tell by the way he had been received. He's now been made Small Business Commissioner.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes, and served time as the Deputy Premier too.

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Do you miss the place?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes and no.

CLEM MACINTYRE: You spent nearly half your life working here.

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes, I come here, but when I left here I was on the board of the Flying Doctors for 12 years, which was very interesting and very rewarding, and I do a bit on the farm. I was on the Streaky Bay council. I wouldn't have stood for the council but they had a public forum there in Streaky Bay and I quietly asked a question, and this CEO had a real whack at me, so I quietly got on my feet and gave her a little bit of advice.

The deputy mayor leant across and said to her, 'Don't say another word. You don't know who you've had a go at. He is the most experienced politician who has ever been here and you've been made to look a fool.' So I thought, 'If that's how you feel about it,' there was a by-election coming up, I nominated and then someone on the staff put out a letter to try to stop me getting elected. Well, I walked it in three to one and I have been on the council ever since. That's been interesting.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It sounds like you have carried the same philosophies that you had here into that.

GRAHAM GUNN: I have. Brendan Nelson, the former federal minister, was a very good minister. I had some dealings with him for people who had been badly treated, and he overturned the bureaucracy, because he went to the doctor school here at Flinders. He's in London now.

Talking about people getting badly treated, one day a little lass came to Parliament House here and my secretary came up and said, 'There's someone downstairs, a girl from Peterborough, and she's very upset.' I said, 'Come in, dear, what's the problem?' She said, 'Look at this letter the federal education department sent me.' I said, 'Come in, sit down and have a cup of coffee. Give us a look at it.' They had overpaid her, but it wasn't her fault. She said, 'What's going to happen?' I said, 'Nothing is going to happen.'

I picked up the phone to the bloke down there in North Terrace and he was a bit arrogant. I said, 'We'll be down to see you at 10 o'clock in the morning.' When I got down there they had her in the room and I walked in and I bange d the desk. I said, 'Who's in charge here?' He said, 'I am.' I said, 'The way you're carrying on, Senator Teague is going to ask a question about you in the federal Senate this afternoon and you mightn't be here tomorrow.'

I said, 'You made the mistake, you fix it. She's not paying and don't you intimidate her again. If you do, I will move a motion of censure in the parliament on you.' I said, 'Come on, dear,' and she never heard another thing. I don't care what they thought about me, but that's a clear case where the average person doesn't know how to defend themselves, but the member has to have the courage. A lot of good people came in there. It was interesting to see how some of them changed while they sat in there. Some of them realised that all the opposition members weren't bad.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I have a feeling that I think I know how you are going to answer this, but what advice would you give to a new MP today?

GRAHAM GUNN: The first thing is make sure you get yourself briefed before you come in; that's the first thing. Don't promise things you can't deliver on; that's the second thing. The third thing is: be approachable and make sure you have a good understanding of the electorate you're going to stand for. The first thing you want to do is make sure you know where the boundaries are. The second thing you want to do is you want to know how many police stations, schools and all those things are in it, and you don't drive past a school unless you call in and say, 'Hello. How are you getting on?' There are real tricks in that.

CLEM MACINTYRE: I think they are object lessons for local members.

GRAHAM GUNN: What you've got to do is you get in the classroom. You could always tell if the teachers were for you or against you. You could always tell, but I never let it worry me. What I would say to the students was, 'Lovely to see you today. Aren't you lucky you've got such a nice teacher.' They didn't know what to say then. Then you would talk to them. What would happen is the kids would all go home and tell their parents that Mr Gunn had been to the school today. I didn't care what the teacher said about me, but the kids would go home and tell their parents. I made it my business to visit all the schools. At one stage, there were 1,141 schools in South Australia. I bet there's not today.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Did you bring many school groups through the chamber?

GRAHAM GUNN: Yes.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So there were no problems about getting school classes from the north-west down to Adelaide?

GRAHAM GUNN: No, they liked coming down on the school bus. A lot of the parents would come too. I would talk to them if I was about. I had a staff member here who was good at talking to them. I would talk to them and ask questions. When you go into the schools, they ask some very good questions. We had a group in the north, and we went to the Hawker school. Olsen was Premier. We got in, and the kids had these set questions. One dear little soul in the front put up her hand and said, 'I want to ask a question.' I said, 'Of course, dear. You can ask it.' She said, 'Mr Olsen, how old's your wife?' I said, 'That's a very good question. We all want to know.'

The principal said, 'What's going to happen?' I said, 'Look, don't worry about it. It's all okay.' He said to me, 'My wife's got afternoon tea for you people. She has never forgotten that one of first things you did as a member, you went to Coorabie. We were living in that terrible house, and you got us a new house there, so she wants you to pay a visit.' I said, 'Of course we are going to go in there.' Do you know where Coorabie is?

CLEM MACINTYRE: No.

GRAHAM GUNN: Coorabie is between Penong and Fowlers Bay, a little district, and there was a school there—terrible. One of the farmers there I knew rang me and said, 'Look, can you come out?' So I did. I got every vote there, so why wouldn't I go out there? He said to me, 'Look at this.' So I went to Hugh Hudson and said, 'Hugh, this is not good enough,' and he fixed it. Hudson actually taught my brother at the university. He said to me one day, 'I should have had you there. You might have had different views.' Out there at Cook—have you been to Cook?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

GRAHAM GUNN: They had extra people out there, so they had to have a second teacher. They sent this girl out and they were going to put her in a caravan. Her father rang me. I said, 'We're not having this.' So I got on to the head of teacher housing, and he said, 'There's no land.' I said, 'What are you talking about? There are millions of acres out there.' So I went to Hudson and told him. I said, 'Hugh, I will give you the chance to do it. It's a good story. If you can't fix it, it has to be in the house.' He said, 'It will be fixed,' and he fixed it on the spot. I said to this bloke in teacher housing, 'I will put you out there at Cook.'

CLEM MACINTYRE: You have spent a lot of time today talking about the effectiveness of a local member and I think given us some object lessons on looking after a local community and working assiduously as a member of parliament to manage those interests. You have been out of the parliament now for 15 years. What thoughts do you have coming back today and reflecting upon that?

GRAHAM GUNN: I think how fortunate I was to be here—how fortunate I was. I have been here other times. I was involved in getting Old Parliament House taken back. We spent a lot of money on upgrading and put that extra floor onto the Legislative Council. That was all important. Other things in my time there: we got electorate officers, we got cars given to us.

The worst decision was when they changed the superannuation. That was the silliest decision and the worst one. I actually offered the government that I would bring the bill in before I left, and I would take the flak, because it was so important. It will happen again in the future. It has to happen.

CLEM MACINTYRE: The government wasn't interested at the time, though?

GRAHAM GUNN: Some of them were, but a couple of them were a bit nervous, you know.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Well, it changed around the whole country, didn't it, too?

GRAHAM GUNN: Except in Queensland, I think. I think Beattie told them to jump in the lake. Senator Quirke said if he had stayed in the federal parliament it wouldn't have happened. You know John Quirke?

CLEM MACINTYRE: I have met him.

GRAHAM GUNN: He and I would catch up once a month for lunch—him and I and Dean Brown and Paul Holloway and John Darley and people like that. Do you know John Elferink? John was Attorney-General in the Northern Territory. He is down here practising as a lawyer.

CLEM MACINTYRE: It sounds like post parliamentary life has been enjoyable—

GRAHAM GUNN: It has been very enjoyable.

CLEM MACINTYRE: —and the friendships you have made in the chamber and in the house you have carried on into your retirement.

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, I have. I'm going to Peter Dunn's 90th birthday party on Sunday. Rob Lawson spoke to me. Do you know Rob?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes.

GRAHAM GUNN: I spoke to Rob on the phone two days ago. I have a lot to do with Dean Brown. I was very good friends with Roger Goldsworthy and Harold Allison. In the last 12 months of his life I used to take him to lunch with us. He told us some very good stories about growing up in the slums of Sheffield, and how his father took him to the ring to learn how to box to look after himself, which was pretty interesting.

I have always believed it is not perfect, but we live in a pretty lucky part of the world. We are pretty lucky people to live here, in Australia, having been around the world many times. I am not going again, because I don't like long aeroplane flights.

I still help the Barunga West Council with a government advisory panel—that's at Port Broughton—and the Light Regional Council at Kapunda. I was asked to be in a group of three to supervise when they had difficulties, disruptive members and that. We sorted it out. I was involved with the Adelaide Plains Council. That was challenging, because there were some people being naughty there, but we sorted that out.

But you look out around here today. I felt as I drove in here how much easier it is to drive around here than it is—I've got a son in Melbourne, though I don't drive there—to drive in Melbourne. You come in to Adelaide, you come down that express road—it's pretty good, isn't it?

CLEM MACINTYRE: Yes. Certainly, I can imagine what it was like on that first trip you made to the parliament in 1970 compared to now.

GRAHAM GUNN: It was dirt until you got to Lincoln Gap. The road from the north wasn't sealed.

CLEM MACINTYRE: So the changes you have seen, the evolution of the parliament, the range of members and so on, are remarkable over that 40 years. I think we might conclude it there and say thank you so much for coming in and talking to us.

GRAHAM GUNN: Well, thank you for giving me the opportunity. I enjoyed my time in parliament, and I have enjoyed my time in the Parliamentary Association—I'm still a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. All I do is wish the next lot of members of the parliament a happy and successful time as long as they understand why they are there. They are there to make sure they leave the place better than they found it.

CLEM MACINTYRE: Good words to finish with. Thanks so much, Graham Gunn.

GRAHAM GUNN: The pleasure's mine.

The interview concluded at 2.05pm.